



House of Commons
Education Committee

**Services for young people:
the Government response**

Sixth Report of Session 2010-12

*Report, together with formal minutes, and
Government Response*

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The Education Committee

The Education Committee is appointed by the House of Commons to examine the expenditure, administration and policy of the Department for Education and its associated public bodies.

Membership at time Report agreed:

Mr Graham Stuart MP (*Conservative, Beverley & Holderness*) (Chair)
Neil Carmichael MP (*Conservative, Stroud*)
Nic Dakin MP (*Labour, Scunthorpe*)
Bill Esterson MP, (*Labour, Sefton Central*)
Pat Glass MP (*Labour, North West Durham*)
Damian Hinds MP (*Conservative, East Hampshire*)
Charlotte Leslie MP (*Conservative, Bristol North West*)
Ian Mearns MP (*Labour, Gateshead*)
Tessa Munt MP (*Liberal Democrat, Wells*)
Lisa Nandy MP (*Labour, Wigan*)
Craig Whittaker MP (*Conservative, Calder Valley*)

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Committee staff

The current staff of the Committee are Dr Lynn Gardner (Clerk), Elisabeth Bates (Second Clerk), Penny Crouzet (Committee Specialist), Benjamin Nicholls (Committee Specialist), Ameet Chudasama (Senior Committee Assistant), Caroline McElwee (Committee Assistant), Paul Hampson (Committee Support Assistant), and Brendan Greene (Office Support Assistant)

Contacts

All correspondence should be addressed to the Clerk of the Education Committee, House of Commons, 7 Millbank, London SW1P 3JA. The telephone number for general enquiries is 020 7219 6181; the Committee's e-mail address is educom@parliament.uk

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1 Introduction

1. On 23 June 2011 we published our Third Report of this Session, *Services for young people*. The Government sent a response on 12 September, which is published as an Appendix to this Report.

2. We welcome the Government's response to our Report; however, we consider a number of our recommendations to have been only partially addressed. We are issuing this Report in order to seek clarification from the Government on the points we raise in bold in the following commentary.

2 The Government's response

The purpose and reach of services

3. In terms of the types of youth service, we are pleased that the Government has agreed with our recommendation to employ the term 'open-access' rather than 'universal' in drawing a distinction with targeted services. We welcome also its acceptance that the most effective response to social issues is often through a blend of open-access and targeted approaches. However, we note its position that the primary purpose of publicly funded services for young people should be to work with the at-risk minority (recommendation 1), which is somewhat at odds with our conclusion that the purpose should be to "offer positive activities and enriching personal and social experiences and not solely to be seen as a mechanism to divert young people from misbehaviour" (recommendation 2).

Identifying successful services: measuring value and impact

4. We welcome the Government's agreement with our conclusion that the research evidence for effective youth services is weak; and we welcome its appointment of the Centre for Excellence and Outcomes in Children and Young People's Services (C4EO) to bring together national research, and its request to the Centre for the Analysis of Youth Transitions (CAYT) to create a data bank of quality assured studies (recommendation 4).

5. We also welcome the Government's recognition of the need for a common outcomes framework for the sector, and its appointment of the Catalyst consortium, led by the National Council for Voluntary Youth Services (NCVYS), to develop such a framework by the end of 2011 (recommendations 5-7). However, while the Government hopes the framework will be adopted widely and become an industry standard, it does not indicate that it intends to promote adoption of the framework. Development of common outcomes measurements which may simply be ignored, with organisations continuing to use the current plethora of different measures, seems rather to miss the point, and will do little to enable comparisons of outcomes for young people between services. **We recommend that the Government actively endorse the outcomes framework being developed by the Catalyst consortium, and make clear to youth services that it expects them to use it unless there is a compelling reason not to do so.**

Service provision: funding, commissioning and payment by results

6. The Government reiterates its position that the provision, shape and funding of youth services is a matter for local authorities (recommendations 2 to 3, 8 to 11). In line with this approach, it declines our invitation to indicate its expectations of what the range and standards of youth services should be across the country (recommendation 10). It does, however, accept our recommendation that it should retain the statutory duty on local authorities to secure young people's access to sufficient educational and recreational leisure-time activities (recommendation 2)—a commitment which we welcome—and states that it will publish “much shorter updated guidance” to reflect its forthcoming policy statement.

7. We are pleased that the Government accepts our call for the Secretary of State to consider using his powers to intervene if a local authority fails to meet its duty to provide sufficient services, and its undertaking that Ministers will “act to secure improvement where there is evidence of significant long standing failure” (recommendation 11). However, given that it has declined to indicate its expectations of an acceptable range and minimum standards of youth services, it is unclear on what basis Ministers would judge provision to have failed. **We recommend that the Government set out the grounds on which it will judge a local authority to have failed to provide sufficient services, and in what ways Ministers will act to secure improvement in such circumstances. In this context, we underline our finding that some local authority youth services have already closed altogether. We also recommend that an explanation of the grounds for intervention by Ministers be included in the revised, shortened guidance being drawn up by the Government.**

8. Our report stated that total annual spending by local authorities on youth services in the last year for which data were available (2009-10) was £350 million. As we noted in the report, we found great difficulty in securing a reliable figure for public spending on youth services across the country. Services have for years been funded from a combination of different central and local authority budgets, as well as charitable and private sources, and the amounts indicated in forecast budgets from central Government for youth have often not been a reliable predictor of actual spending on youth services. Consequently, on the advice of the Department for Education, we used local authority outturn spending on youth services, as reported to the Department, which records the actual amount spent on those services rather than nominal funds available. The Government's response states that the figure of £350 million “does not represent a complete view of spending on services for young people in 2009-10 as it excludes a number of additional funding streams”. However, the Government provides no estimates of its own, nor does it indicate how far removed it calculates the £350 million figure to be. **We find it inadequate for the Government to dismiss our estimate of public spending on youth services, which is based on its own figures, without explaining in more detail why it has done so and without providing its own estimate. The Government should provide us with its own assessment of annual public spending on youth services for each of the ten years prior to introduction of the Early Intervention Grant in April this year.**

9. The Government agrees that “concerns about the quality of commissioning practice persist”. It rejects the idea of issuing new guidance but intends to “substantially shorten and sharpen” current guidance. However, it does not say whether it intends to include in that guidance the practical recommendations for local authorities which we set out in our report (with the exception of our call for local authorities to set out how they will involve young people in commissioning, which it rejects) (recommendation 14). **We invite the Government to clarify whether or not it intends to include the Committee’s practical recommendations on commissioning in its revised guidance for local authorities; and if not, for what reasons.**

The youth services workforce

10. We are disappointed that the Government merely restates the position which it set out during our inquiry—namely that it does not intend to involve itself in any way on questions concerning the recruitment, training and qualification of the youth services workforce (recommendations 17 to 20).

Youth volunteering and the National Citizen Service

11. We welcome the Government’s emphasis on young people’s democratic participation, in particular the establishment of a ministerial advisory group of young people (recommendation 21).

12. The Government rejects the Committee’s conclusion that charges may deter young people from low income families from participating in National Citizen Service (recommendation 22). We are encouraged to hear that half of the 2011 pilot providers are not charging at all, and that others have put in place bursary schemes. However, **we remain concerned about the potential impact of charging and ask the Government to evaluate and report back to us in due course what impact, if any, charging has had on participation as part of its evaluation of the 2011 pilot.**

13. The Government’s response echoes its evidence to us in being vague about public funding for National Citizen Service beyond the 2011 and 2012 pilots, for which resources have been set aside. It describes its expectations that businesses, communities and parents will become involved with funding and fund-raising as the scheme progresses, but it remains unclear whether these sources will replace Government funding completely post-2012 (recommendations 23 to 26). Therefore, **we request that the Government (i) clarify whether or not it intends to cease funding National Citizen Service altogether beyond the pilot years, and (ii) set out what it has learnt from the 2011 pilot with regard to the rate of take-up amongst 16-year olds and consequent likely costs in future years.**

Conclusions and recommendations

1. We recommend that the Government actively endorse the outcomes framework being developed by the Catalyst consortium, and make clear to youth services that it expects them to use it unless there is a compelling reason not to do so. (Paragraph 5)
2. We recommend that the Government set out the grounds on which it will judge a local authority to have failed to provide sufficient services, and in what ways Ministers will act to secure improvement in such circumstances. In this context, we underline our finding that some local authority youth services have already closed altogether. We also recommend that an explanation of the grounds for intervention by Ministers be included in the revised, shortened guidance being drawn up by the Government. (Paragraph 7)
3. We find it inadequate for the Government to dismiss our estimate of public spending on youth services, which is based on its own figures, without explaining in more detail why it has done so and without providing its own estimate. The Government should provide us with its own assessment of annual public spending on youth services for each of the ten years prior to introduction of the Early Intervention Grant in April this year. (Paragraph 8)
4. We invite the Government to clarify whether or not it intends to include the Committee's practical recommendations on commissioning in its revised guidance for local authorities; and if not, for what reasons. (Paragraph 9)
5. We remain concerned about the potential impact of charging for National Citizen Service and ask the Government to evaluate and report back to us in due course what impact, if any, charging has had on participation as part of its evaluation of the 2011 pilot. (Paragraph 12)
6. We request that the Government (i) clarify whether or not it intends to cease funding National Citizen Service altogether beyond the pilot years, and (ii) set out what it has learnt from the 2011 pilot with regard to the rate of take-up amongst 16-year olds and consequent likely costs in future years. (Paragraph 13)

Appendix: Government response

Government response

The Education Committee published the report of its inquiry into “services beyond the schools/college day for young people, primarily those aged 13-25” on 23 June 2011. This document sets out the Government’s response to the Committee’s report.

This document is not a full statement of Government policy on young people or services for young people, but rather a direct response to the Committee’s specific recommendations. The Government is continuing to develop policy in this area in the context of the Government’s social policy review and in the light of recent civil unrest. As described below, the Government expects to issue a full statement of policy on young people later in 2011.

Introduction

Fifty years on from the Albermarle report, the Government is engaged in an extensive collaboration with young people, providers and commissioners to develop a new *Positive for Youth* vision and policy for services for young people. This process of joint development is crucial to the Government given the leadership of local areas in understanding local needs and commissioning publicly funded services. Later this autumn, the Government will set out a new, positive vision for young people and services for young people. It will underline the Government’s commitment to:

- All young people playing a positive and active role in society, with a voice in matters that affect them, and the ability to shape their own life story;
- The family as the most important influence in the lives of young people;
- Encouraging communities, including businesses, to take greater responsibility for actively supporting the engagement and wellbeing of young people and the sustainability of local provision;
- The personal and social development of all young people as they grow to adulthood and the role of skilled youth workers in supporting those young people who wouldn’t otherwise develop crucial life skills and qualities;
- The important role of services for young people in supporting participation and attainment in education and training; developing resilience to engagement in risky behaviour, helping to prevent involvement in crime or substance misuse; and reducing the risk of teenage pregnancy and other poor outcomes;
- Publicly funded services for young people prioritising early intervention with the most disadvantaged and vulnerable young people and their families
- The retention of the existing statutory duty on local authorities in relation to services for young people but with shorter and updated statutory guidance;

- Government funding in 2011–12 and 2012–13 to support national and local youth participation; better brokerage of relationships between businesses and youth projects; and additional sector-led support to local authority commissioners of services for young people; and
- Piloting National Citizen Service in 2011 and 2012 as a way to give all 16 year olds a challenging and rewarding personal and social development experience in which they can learn from others from different backgrounds, contribute actively to their communities, and celebrate their transition towards adulthood.

The purpose and reach of services

1. Various government initiatives from 1939 onwards have aspired to create a universal offer of youth services to all young people, principally delivered through local authorities. Yet, although the number of young people accessing services has risen over the past decade or so, in reality youth services have never reached anything like 100% of young people. Services often referred to as ‘universal’ tend to be open to all young people but located in particular areas, often of disadvantage, and are arguably targeted in a geographical sense. We do not believe that there are any truly universal youth services and consequently propose to use the term ‘open-access’ rather than ‘universal’ in drawing a distinction with targeted services. We recommend that the Government do the same. (Paragraph 19)

The Government agrees with the Committee that there are no local authority youth services which reach all young people, and that this is not a realistic aspiration. A large majority of young people receive the opportunities and support they need from their families, friends, and wider community or from their school or college. The Government believes that the primary purpose of publicly funded services for young people is to work with a minority of young people to:

- make sure young people at risk of dropping out of learning or not achieving their full potential engage and attain in education or training;
- develop young people’s resilience to engagement in risky behaviour; help prevent involvement in crime or substance misuse; and reduce the risk of teenage pregnancy and other poor outcomes—all of which can undermine young people’s life chances and have a cost to wider society; and
- provide opportunities, for those who wouldn’t otherwise have them, to develop the personal and social skills and qualities they need for learning, work and their transition to adulthood—including self-regulation, relationship-building, and decision-making.

The Government is therefore content to adopt the term ‘open access’ to distinguish between targeted services that work with specific cohorts of young people from services that young people are able to choose to access.

The Government does, however, want all young people to have the opportunity to be part of organised community-led activities. As a focal point in their transition to adulthood the Government's ambition is that National Citizen Service will provide a universal opportunity to all 16 year olds for personal and social development and community service and engagement. This was not appreciated by the Select Committee in their report.

2. Services for young people have myriad aims and we do not intend to comment on their individual merits. However, we do underline an important point of principle about provision: namely that the purposes of youth services should primarily be to offer positive activities and enriching personal and social experiences and not solely to be seen as a mechanism to divert young people from misbehaviour. This is especially important given that 85% of young people's time is spent outside formal education. We urge the Government to announce publicly its intention to retain the statutory duty on local authorities to secure young people's access to sufficient educational and recreational leisure-time activities, which requires them to take account of young people's views and publicise up-to-date information about the activities and facilities available; and we remind local authorities that they must have regard to this duty. (Paragraph 27)

It is a pity that Committee members did not take oral evidence from more young people or complete their planned visit to Bolton and Trafford to gain a more direct understanding of young people's needs and aspirations and the role and purpose of youth services in supporting these.

The Government agrees that services for young people have an important role to play in engaging young people as positive and active members of their community, and supporting their personal and social development and participation in education and training. Many young people get these opportunities through their families, school or college, and the wider community or existing youth volunteering groups who receive no public funding, and therefore do not need access to publicly funded provision commissioned by local authorities. Local commissioners need to understand what opportunities exist for young people locally and decide and identify local priority needs for investing public funds to support open access or targeted services for young people. Their key consideration should be the quality of young people's experience of the services they receive and the value that is added rather than raw numbers of young people reached.

The Government is also committed to the vital role that services for young people play in intervening early to address effectively problematic behaviours such as risky sexual activity, substance misuse, running away, and youth crime. Targeted and open access services can both be important forms of early intervention, particularly with disadvantaged young people.

The Government believes that local authorities have a critical place-shaping role and acknowledges the strong support from the youth sector for retaining the statutory duty on local authorities to secure young people's access to sufficient educational and recreational leisure-time activities. The Government is committed to retaining this duty, and will publish much shorter updated guidance to reflect the new statement of policy on young people and services for young people. The Government's commitment to young people's views being taken into account is discussed further in response to recommendation 21.

3. We understand that when public funding is limited priority may be given to services which support the most disadvantaged. However, our evidence showed that open access services can sometimes be as effective as targeted ones in reaching those young people that both can perform similarly life-changing roles in young people's lives, and that young people often move between them. Consequently, in determining which services to commission, local authorities must recognise that an open-access service could be more appropriate than a targeted one for improving certain outcomes for young people, or that both types may be needed. (Paragraph 28)

Through the introduction of the Early Intervention Grant the Government has given local authorities greater flexibility and responsibility to prioritise funding for services for children, young people and families according to local need—particularly the needs of the most disadvantaged and vulnerable young people and their families. It is for local commissioners to consider available evidence and make their own decisions about the effectiveness of different services in realising desired outcomes, and the relative cost-effectiveness of targeted and open access provision in reaching key target groups.

As stated above, the Government agrees that open access services such as youth clubs and youth centres can be non-stigmatising settings in which to identify and engage young people who need more intensive or specialist support, and an important means of integrating such young people into mainstream activities. The Government is itself investing in a number of significant open access youth centres through the *myplace* programme to create high quality environments for a wide range of services for young people.

The Government is aware of recent evidence¹ that services for vulnerable young people which include a mix of open access and targeted services were the ones most appreciated by young people and their families or carers, and that specialist services co-located in open access settings can address concerns around the stigma which might otherwise be attached to accessing these services.²

1 Walker & Donaldson (2011) Intervening to improve outcomes for vulnerable young people: a review of the evidence DfE Research Report DfE-RR078 <https://www.education.gov.uk/publications/R5G/publicationDetail/Page1/DFE-RR078>

2 Social Exclusion Unit (2004) Breaking the Cycle: Taking Stock of progress and priorities for the future, ODPM.

Identifying successful services: measuring value and impact

4. In light of the limited and somewhat outdated research evidence base about youth services, we believe there to be a strong case for relevant university research institutions and other academics in the field, perhaps in partnership with sector research journals, to conduct a meta-analysis of studies relating to the impact and effectiveness of youth services. The Government should commission such an analysis from an appropriate consortium as part of its forthcoming youth strategy, and should publish the results, to contribute to the public debate. (Paragraph 36)

The Government agrees that there is a pressing need to improve the research evidence base for youth services in England. The Centre for Excellence and Outcomes in Children and Young People's Services (C4EO) was set up to bring together good local practice and national research about 'what works'. C4EO has provided a wide range of products and support services, including research reviews and briefings (e.g. on targeted youth support, increasing engagement in out of school activities and reducing alcohol consumption among young people), case studies of validated local practice, and access to a range of data sources via an interactive mapping tool which allows local areas to produce summary area profiles. It has also provided bespoke services including tailor made support from sector specialists for practitioners looking to improve the effectiveness of front line service provision.

To strengthen the evidence base for local commissioning, the Government has commissioned the Centre for Analysis of Youth Transitions (CAYT) to publish standards of evidence so that providers and commissioners can decide how best to monitor and evaluate services; and to create a data bank of quality assured studies on the impact of youth services that will provide local commissioners with access to reliable and independently validated information on the effectiveness of different programmes. The first studies will be added to the bank during late autumn 2011.

5. There is little doubt that good youth services can have a transformational effect on young people's lives and can play a vital role both in supporting vulnerable young people and in enriching the lives of others without particular disadvantage. However, we were frustrated in our efforts to uncover a robust outcome measurement framework, in particular those that would allow services to be compared in order to assess their relative impact. We were alarmed that the Department for Education is expecting local authorities to make spending decisions on the basis of such poor data about what services are being provided, let alone which are effective. (Paragraph 39)

All local authorities already have access to a range of data about young people that can support the commissioning of youth services. This includes information about pupil absence and exclusions, attainment, first time entrance to the criminal justice system, teenage parents, and young people not in education employment or training.

The Government agrees that effective commissioning requires robust frameworks for demonstrating and measuring impact and effectiveness. The Government is therefore funding through the DfE strategic partner for youth services—the Catalyst consortium led by the National Council for Voluntary Youth Services (NCVYS)—the development of an outcomes framework that could be used to understand and measure the relative impact of services for young people.

A Children’s Improvement Board has been established with responsibility for the leadership, development and implementation of new sector-led improvement arrangements. Membership is made up of sector representatives—the Association of Directors of Children’s Services (ADCS), the Society of Local Authority Chief Executives (SOLACE), the Local Government Group, and the DfE. The Government will support local authorities to commission services for young people by supplementing existing funding for these sector-led support arrangements with £230k in 2011–12 and £550k in 2012–13 of additional funding to ensure that local authorities get the support they need. The Local Government Group is leading a consultation with the local authority sector to determine the nature of this support which will be commissioned at national level through the Children’s Improvement Board.

6. We accept that the outcomes of individual youth work relationships can be hard to quantify and the impact of encounters with young people may take time to become clear and be complex. In that context, it is hard to reject the basic tenet expounded by a range of youth service representatives and young people themselves, that ‘you know good youth work when you see it’. However, with a tight spending settlement and an increase in commissioning of youth services at a local level, we also believe it is essential that publicly funded services are able to demonstrate what difference they make to young people. (Paragraph 40)

7. Whilst wanting to guard against inappropriate or distorting measures like simple head counting, there is no good reason why robust but sophisticated outcome measures should not be developed to allow services to demonstrate the impact they have on young people’s personal and social development. We accept the evidence we heard from the National Council for Voluntary Youth Services (NCVYS) that such tools already exist and that what is needed is agreement on a common set of standards which will allow services to be evaluated and compared. Consequently, we welcome the Government’s decision to commission NCVYS to deliver an outcomes framework for application across the sector. This framework should take account of personal and social wellbeing measures, young people should be closely involved in its design and application and it should be simple and inexpensive to administer. New Philanthropy Capital’s wellbeing index presents a good template for initial consideration. (Paragraph 51)

The Government agrees that it is essential that publicly funded services are able to demonstrate the difference they make to the lives of young people. This is true both for youth work based interventions as well as all other targeted and open access out-of-

school or college services for young people. This should include their impact on young people's personal and social development, their health, and their direct or indirect impact on other outcomes such as participation, attainment, and the avoidance of a range of negative or risky behaviours and outcomes, such as youth crime, substance misuse or unemployment.

As noted above, the Government is funding the development of a common framework so that providers, commissioners and potential investors have a common language for understanding and measuring the impact of services for young people. The framework will not seek to replace existing impact measurement tools. Catalyst will work with a wide range of stakeholders, particularly young people and organisations such as New Philanthropy Capital, to develop the outcomes framework by the end of 2011. The Government's hope is that many in the sector will contribute to and buy into this work so that the resulting framework is adopted widely and becomes an 'industry standard' framework for impact measurement.

Service provision: funding, commissioning and payment by results

8. We disagree with the Minister that spending of £350 million per year—equating to around £77 per young person aged 13 to 19—on youth services in England equates to “large slugs of public money”. On the contrary, we congratulate the sector for its long-standing dexterity in making limited resources go a long way and for continuing to support young people despite reliance on a patchwork of different funds. However, in the tight financial settlement, services will need to redouble their efforts to leverage in other sources of funding, including making better use of philanthropic and charitable funds and private sector investment. Our evidence suggested that many smaller services found it hard to access such sources: we recommend that the Government and local authorities take positive action to support them by brokering partnerships with alternative funders. (Paragraph 61)

The £350m figure quoted by the committee does not represent a complete view of spending on services for young people in 2009-10 as it excludes a number of additional funding streams. From April 2011, the majority of funding streams for young people have been pooled within the Early Intervention Grant (EIG). Local authorities now have the freedom to decide how much to spend on services for young people from the EIG, the Revenue Support Grant, or other sources. It is their responsibility to ensure that public spending is well targeted and delivers results—we have set out elsewhere in this response how we are supporting them to do so through actions to improve the evidence base and the quality of commissioning.

The Government agrees that providers of services for young people should continue to seek to diversify their sources of income.

Many private sector companies and their employees already give time and money to support young people and organisations that work with them, and there are some good

examples of organisations that effectively broker these relationships. The Government recognises the need for improved brokerage to attract more businesses to engage with services for young people—to create new opportunities for social investment, act as a contact point for sponsorship opportunities, and encourage leading businesses to act as youth champions.

The Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Children and Families has convened a group of leading businesses with a strong existing commitment to young people to advise on how to get more businesses engaged. The Government is also committing £70,000 in 2001–12 and £250,000 in 2012–13 to help scale up and improve brokerage between businesses and the youth sector.

As the DfE's strategic partner for the voluntary youth sector, the Catalyst consortium plans to develop a Youth Social Finance Retailer to support voluntary organisations working with young people to access social finance including from the Big Society Bank. It also plans to establish a trading company to provide licensing and franchising opportunities to help organisations scale up their operations and access markets.

9. It appears that provision of youth services is currently “patchwork”, as the Minister suggested to us, with a degree of duplication and overlap between activities and providers in some areas. We did not, however, hear evidence that decisions about current cuts to services were being made on the basis of assessment of what was needed locally and in order to weed out overlapping provision. On the contrary, the Government’s assessment seems to be that cuts are being applied across the board to ‘salami slice’ youth services, where they are continuing at all. (Paragraph 68)

10. Youth services cannot hope to be immune to necessary public spending cuts. However, there have already been very significant and, in the Minister’s own words, “disproportionate” cuts to local authority youth services, ranging from 20% to 100% in some areas, and further cuts are planned over the Spending Review period. For many wholly or partially publicly funded youth services, changes to Government spending and funding structures—including the reduction to the value of previous funds redirected into the Early Intervention Grant and the reduction in overall Revenue Support Grant to local authorities—may be both dramatic and long-lasting. The Government’s lack of urgency in articulating a youth policy or strategic vision is regrettable, is compounding an already difficult situation and should not be allowed to continue. In setting out its strategic vision the Government should indicate its expectations of the range and standards of youth services which should be available across the country including, for example, access to information and advice, to varied opportunities for personal and social development and to volunteering. Such opportunities need to reflect the different requirements of those beginning adolescence and those entering adulthood, as well as other socio-economic factors. (Paragraph 69)

Having inherited the largest peacetime deficit in Britain's history, the Government decided it had no option but to reduce public spending—every part of the public sector needs to play its part in reducing the legacy of Government debt and the massive overdraft that the Government has inherited. But we have ensured in the Local Government Finance settlement that no council will see a reduction in spending power—a combination of income from Government grants and income from council tax—of more than 8.8% in 2011–12. The average reduction in spending power is 4.4%. It is up to councils to prioritise funding considering the settlement in the round, but we do not expect councils to respond to reductions in their budgets by passing on disproportionate cuts to other service providers.

The Government regrets the fact that this and a number of the Committee's other recommendations go against the principle of local flexibility. The Government believes that local areas are best placed to make decisions about local services for young people. These should be based on a robust analysis of local needs informed by the views of young people and an understanding of local provision. This will lead to priorities for public investment and commissioning decisions being made in the light of the best available evidence of impact. In introducing the Early Intervention Grant, the Government made clear its belief that constrained public funding to local authorities would be best targeted on early intervention with young people at risk. However, it will not prescribe the range or type of services that should be provided in order to meet statutory duties. The Government does, however, expect local authorities to work closely with local partners to commission the very best outcomes for young people in their area. Under Section 10 of the Children Act 2004, and specifically the duty to cooperate, local authorities have a duty to co-operate with their key partners, including police and health commissioners, to improve the well-being of local children.

Local authorities will be taking on new responsibilities for public health, subject to passage of the health and Social Care Bill. This will open up new opportunities for community engagement and to develop holistic solutions to health and well being for young people. Health and Wellbeing boards will provide the vehicle for local government to work in partnership with the new Clinical Commissioning Groups and other partners to develop comprehensive Joint Strategic Needs Assessment and robust health and well being strategies which will set the framework for commissioning of health care, social care and public health services. These strategies will also take into account wider ranging local interventions to support health and wellbeing such as community safety partnerships. The Public Health White Paper takes a life course approach and this will enable specific focus on prevention and early intervention for children, young people and families.

The Government rejects the Committee's accusation that it has lacked urgency in articulating a youth policy. The Government co-hosted a successful Youth Summit in March with young people, providers and commissioners, in which the Chairman of the Select Committee participated. The Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Children and Families emphasised the need to get the Policy document right with maximum

input and collaboration from young people in particular and that this means the Government will not sacrifice quality for speed. The Government has since been working to develop a shared vision for a society that is positive for youth. This collaborative process is vital if we are to develop policies and services for the future which are driven by the needs of young people, sustainable locally and provide best value for money.

Nineteen discussion papers have now been put into the public domain on the Department for Education's *Positive for Youth* website inviting views on the diverse issues raised by young people, and on specific ways in which Government can support effective provision. The Government has also commissioned work from sector leaders on a narrative for the role of youth work to make clear the specific value that youth work can add as part of the wider provision of services for young people. The Government believes that this will be the most effective way of encouraging sustainable and effective investment in the sort of support we all want to see for young people.

11. We welcome the Government's issuing of draft statutory guidance to local authorities not to pass on "disproportionate" cuts to the voluntary sector. We urge it to finalise this guidance and ensure that local authorities are made aware of its application to youth services. However, if local authorities fail to meet their statutory duty to provide sufficient services for young people, the Secretary of State for Education should consider employing his powers to direct them to commission adequate provision. (Paragraph 70)

The Best Value Duty is a duty on local authorities to secure continuous improvement in the way in which their functions are exercised. The Government has published new Best Value statutory guidance which sets out clearly the way that councils should work with the voluntary sector when facing difficult funding decisions, including the expectation that local authorities should seek to avoid passing on disproportionate cuts. The guidance applies to all services commissioned by local authorities, including services for young people. Local authorities should also consider the recommendations made by Ofsted in their recent report³ on the commissioning of services for young people, including in relation to the role of the voluntary and community sector.

Local authorities are responsible for the quality of the services they commission and for driving their own improvement. Their primary accountability for this quality and improvement is to local people. However, the Government takes very seriously any failure to provide an acceptable standard of service for children and young people, and Ministers will act to secure improvement where there is evidence of significant, long standing failure, or where there is evidence that a local authority has been unable to do so.

3 An evaluation of approaches to commissioning services for young people. Ofsted. August 2011

12. We agree with the Minister’s concern about a lack of awareness and information sharing between services and geographical areas. The Department should take a lead in sharing best practice. We recommend that it establish a dedicated area on the ‘Youth’ section of its website for youth services and young people to post examples of innovative practice to encourage services to learn from one another. Local authorities should establish similar area-wide repositories. (Paragraph 71)

The Government is committed to a sector-led approach to performance improvement. The DfE is funding Catalyst (the Department’s strategic partner for young people) to share good practice and strengthen collaboration across the voluntary youth sector. As discussed in response to Recommendation 5, it has also committed supplementary funding over the next 2 years of £780,000 to the Local Government Group (LGG) to ensure local authorities get the support they need to manage the pressures they face in delivering services for young people. Through the LGG, the Government is consulting the local authority sector on how this additional funding can best be used to support their needs in relation to services for young people. This may include arrangements for signposting and sharing innovative practice through avenues such as the LGG’s Communities of Practice.

13. We support the broad principle that local authorities should primarily become strategic commissioners rather than simply the default providers of youth services. However, given that a significant proportion of youth services are already provided by the voluntary sector, to make significant savings local authorities will need to consider radical options—for instance, converting entire youth services departments into social enterprises, as in Kensington and Chelsea, or handing management of youth centres to the voluntary sector, as in Surrey. (Paragraph 83)

The Government welcomes the Committee’s support for its ambition for local authorities to become primarily commissioners rather than default providers of services for young people. In the current fiscal climate it is more important than ever that local authorities and other local commissioners work together to achieve value for money from limited available resources. Commissioners will want to consider the merits of different structures and arrangements for delivery in the light of local needs and in relation to their ability to leverage funding from other sources, engage employees in entrepreneurial and responsive ways of working, embed genuine partnership working, and release cost savings. Ofsted has made helpful recommendations to local authorities in their recent report on approaches to commissioning services for young people.⁴

The Community Right to Challenge in the Localism Bill will give voluntary and community bodies, local authority employees wishing to form a mutual to deliver a service, and parish councils more opportunities to take over running services for which local authorities are currently responsible.

4 An evaluation of approaches to commissioning services for young people. Ofsted. August 2011

The Cabinet Office is funding a £10m Mutuals Support Programme (MSP) to support public sector workers to consider and implement plans to spin out into independent enterprises. A Mutuals Information Service (MIS) will also provide advice to fledgling mutuals. Referrals for support from the MSP will come to Cabinet Office from the MIS.

14. We believe there are a number of practical recommendations which will make commissioning of youth services more effective. The Government should draw these to the attention of local authorities, either through its forthcoming Public Service Reform White Paper, or by issuing guidance on commissioning practice. First, rather than simply continuing to commission those services currently being provided, local authorities should undertake a thorough review of what their young people want and need, avoiding duplication and waste and taking into account what is already being provided by other agencies. Second, the outcomes against which services are commissioned must include positive as well as deficit indicators. Third, local authorities should encourage partnerships bids, particularly those which mix large bodies which are well-known and have the capacity to invest in collecting management information, with smaller, community-based providers. Finally, Government should require local authorities to set out how they will involve young people in commissioning decisions, whether in representative roles, such as young mayors, or through processes such as participatory budgeting. The evidence we received suggested that such involvement can not only empower young people, but also enhance the effectiveness of spending decisions. (Paragraph 84)

There is already substantial guidance to local authorities on commissioning services for young people in the statutory guidance issued by the last Government to underpin Section 507B of the Education and Inspections Act 2006. Nevertheless concerns about the quality of commissioning practice persist and the recent OFSTED report referenced in the answer to recommendation 13 made a number of helpful recommendations for improvement. The Government does not therefore agree that additional lengthy detailed guidance is the way forward but does intend to revise and substantially shorten and sharpen the current statutory guidance.

As noted above, local authority improvement and support activity is being led by the Local Government Group (LGG) through a sector-led approach that will respond to the priority needs identified by local authorities themselves. This may result in an offer of commissioning support to local authorities, including information on effective delivery models, if this is what local authorities call for.

The Government agrees that good commissioning of services for young people should be based on a thorough needs assessment and understanding of the local landscape of provision and that young people should be involved in decision making. It also agrees with the need for positive measures and indicators of the success of services for young people that reinforce and help create a more positive place and perception of young people in society. It intends therefore to set out its views on a balanced package of measures of success for services to young people for use at local and national level. The

Government rejects, however, the need for any prescription in the model of service delivery that local authorities should adopt, and the need for any new requirement on local authorities to set out how they will involve young people in commissioning.

15. We do not believe that a system whereby local authorities withhold payment until a service demonstrates specific results is suited to the funding of youth services, particularly open-access ones. First, many services simply do not currently collect appropriate data to measure outcomes. Second, the cohort is ill-defined, with many young people dipping in and out of services over a period of time. Third, isolating the impact of a single intervention is hard when a service may be only one of several influences on a young person's life. Fourth, results are likely to be achieved over a long time frame over which services would struggle to operate without any up-front funding. (Paragraph 90)

The Government recognises the challenges and barriers identified by the Committee to the use of Payment by Results (PBR) for services for young people. Nevertheless, it believes that PBR may have a role to play in creating a stronger focus for commissioners and providers of services on results and the impact of provision. PBR arrangements need not always involve the full value of a contract being withheld until outcomes are delivered. The Government will keep under review the scope for PBR for services for young people.

16. However, we do believe that there is scope for a form of social impact bond to be applied at a local authority level, in addition to core spending on youth services by local authorities. Under such a model, the Government could encourage social investment in a basket of outcomes for young people in a local area. If those outcomes improved, there could be a return to the investor and also to the local authority. We recommend that the Government carry out a feasibility study on such a system, bearing in mind that it should be in addition to current spending on youth services, not an alternative. (Paragraph 91)

As a form of payment by results, Social Impact Bonds (SIBs) face all of the challenges the Committee identifies. The Government shares the Committee's view that a basket of measures may help to overcome some of the challenges associated with a single measure for PBR such as perverse incentives. However, it rejects the implicit recommendation that central Government would necessarily be the sole commissioner of a Social Impact Bond for young people. The Department for Education is already having discussions with Cabinet Office and outside parties and is exploring a range of possible opportunities to pilot the use of Social Impact Bonds for services for young people and envisages that any such pilots are likely to involve local authorities as joint commissioners.

The youth services workforce

17. Volunteers are highly valued and already much deployed across youth services and should continue to be encouraged. The experience of The Scout Association, amongst many others, shows the considerable potential for volunteers to be trained effectively and form a core part of the workforce. It is not, however, clear to what degree greater use of volunteers is possible, since they already comprise a sizeable proportion of the workforce—87% according to analysis by the Children’s Workforce Development Council—and there are costs to their training and support. However, additional barriers to their participation should not be introduced, and in this context we welcome the Government’s pledge to scale back the bureaucratic nature of Criminal Record Bureau checks. (Paragraph 102)

The Government agrees fully with the Committee’s assessment of the value of volunteers and acknowledges the costs associated with their training and support. One of the key aims of the Big Society is to promote and encourage more volunteering and the review of the barring and criminal records regimes to scale back CRB checks to common sense levels will help to address a key barrier. Skilled professionals also have an important role to play in services for young people, and ultimately it is the responsibility of employers to determine the appropriate composition of their workforce. The work of the Catalyst Consortium to map the skills and development landscape of the voluntary youth sector should help employers to make informed decisions on the training needs of volunteers.

18. We acknowledge that the requirement to have a degree in order to acquire professional youth worker status may have had positive effects in cementing youth work as a profession. However, we are not aware of any research that shows definitively that higher levels of qualifications in youth work lead to better outcomes for young people, and it was not clear to us why a degree should be the only route into qualified youth work status. We believe that it would be timely to review the knowledge and skills likely to be needed by youth workers over the next decade and the range of initial training and qualifications which would help to secure these. (Paragraph 103)

For many employers the youth work degree provides essential evidence of an individual’s skill and professionalism to work with challenging young people in challenging circumstances. But young people are diverse and a range of qualifications and training pathways are required to secure the mix of trained staff needed to help and support them. It is for employers not the Government to determine the skills and qualifications required within the sector and any review of the knowledge and skills required must be employer-led and involve relevant sector bodies and the sector skills council network.

19. The low priority afforded to continuing professional development of the youth workforce is concerning, in particular the fact that, according to the last audit conducted by the National Youth Agency in 2008, some 33% of local authorities

spent nothing at all on it, despite accredited terms and conditions for youth workers recommending that it should account for a minimum of 5% of local authority youth service budgets. Investment in continuing professional development would be particularly worthwhile in enabling practitioners to share good practice and new ways of working between services. The Government must engage with the questions about qualifications, training and continuing professional development which we raise in this Report, and set out how it intends positively to support the sector in its developing its workforce. (Paragraph 105)

The Government agrees with the Committee about the importance of continuing professional development and understands their concerns at the evidence of the low priority afforded to this in some parts of the country. However, this problem will only be resolved when employers are committed to a solution and take the lead in driving it forward. As part of the *Positive for Youth* process, the Department for Education has recently published a discussion paper seeking views on what more might be done to put in place effective national employer-led arrangements to support workforce development.

20. We did not hear sufficient evidence to convince us of the merits or otherwise of introducing a licence to practise for youth work, although we note that it does seem rather odd that other professionals working with children are subject to protection of title, when similar standards are not applied to the youth workforce. A recent proposal by youth organisations to establish an Institute for Youth Work which could set minimum standards across the sector and promote continuing professional development, is worth further consideration. (Paragraph 110)

The Government is supporting sector-led work to consider the case for establishing an Institute for Youth Work. This work, which is being undertaken by the Catalyst Consortium, will include consideration of the possible roles and functions of an Institute and the demand within the sector for a body to undertake these activities. The Government will not support any proposal to use regulatory powers to establish an Institute, nor impose any additional burdens or costs on employers. An Institute would need widespread support from professionals who would need to be convinced of the benefits and prepared to shoulder the burdens it might create.

Youth volunteering and the National Citizen Service

21. We applaud those talented young people who are engaging in positions of democratic responsibility and leadership, and organisations like the British Youth Council and UK Youth Parliament for enabling them to take up such roles. We welcome the Government's support for democratic participation, and urge it to translate into practice its ambition to have a youth engagement body in every authority in the country which plays an active role in shaping and scrutinising those policies which affect young people. (Paragraph 117)

The Government wants all young people to play a positive and active role in society. It is committed to young people's involvement in public decision making, and believes that they should have opportunities to express their views on matters that affect their lives in line with Article 12 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. While there has been progress in recent years to give young people greater influence in decision making, this has too often been limited to and constrained within the parameters and requirements of centrally prescribed funding streams. The Government would like young people to have genuine and wide ranging influence across all relevant policies and services.

There are many proven ways for young people to get involved in local decision making including young mayors, youth councils and youth parliaments, board member roles, youth fora, grant givers, young advisors and young inspectors. The Government will therefore not prescribe to local areas the form that youth participation should take, but believes that local authorities and other local commissioners such as Health and Wellbeing Boards, Police and Crime Boards, and Integrated Transport Authorities, should consider the range of options that are available to them and put in place the arrangements that most suit their particular needs.

The Department for Education currently supports the activities of the UK Youth Parliament which has a unique role in mirroring the UK's national democratic processes. The Department has recently concluded a bidding exercise for grant funding of £850,000 from October 2011- March 2013 for an organisation to provide support for local and national youth participation in England. This will include continued support for the UK Youth Parliament as well as a group of representative young people at national level to advise the Under Secretary of State for Children and Families, and other ministers across Government as appropriate, on the impact of Government policy on young people. The grant has been awarded to the British Youth Council.

22. Whilst we acknowledge that a nominal cost may ensure commitment on the part of participants, we believe that the inevitable effect of providers charging up to £100 for participation may well be to deter young people from low income families. (Paragraph 123)

The Government rejects the Committee's assertion that charges will deter young people from low income families to participate in National Citizen Service (NCS).

To secure young people's commitment to participating in the programme, NCS pilot providers have been given the flexibility to ask young people for a small contribution towards the total cost, to set young people a fundraising target, or to put in place a refundable deposit on completion of the programme. Committing upfront to a financial contribution can cement participants' commitment to the programme and reduce the risk of them dropping out at a later date.

Around half of the providers piloting NCS in 2011 are asking for a financial contribution from young people or their parents/carers. Where there is a charge, it is typically around £25. All 2011 pilot providers asking for a financial contribution have put in place mechanisms to ensure that no young person is prevented from taking part if they are unable to contribute financially. Some providers have put in place a bursary scheme allowing those who can pay more to do so, and others have put in place a tiered charging model. Around half of the 2011 pilot providers are not charging at all.

NCS is an intensive programme providing a range of activities, including 2 residential weeks, and requiring a 3 week full-time commitment from young people followed by a further period of volunteering in their community. The Government believes that a contribution of £25 towards the costs of participation represents good value for money for young people. The evaluation of the 2011 and 2012 NCS pilots will provide evidence of whether charging policies have deterred young people from low income families.

23. Evidence from the Minister for Civil Society and the Government Adviser on National Citizen Service suggested to us that funding for the programme may not continue to be ring-fenced beyond the pilots. Indeed, we found it ominous that both spoke in terms of generating funds from elsewhere, despite having emphasised that additional money was being made available through the Cabinet Office. We are concerned that this may mean, contrary to the Government's assurances, that National Citizen Service might end up in direct competition with other youth services for funds at local authority level. (Paragraph 125)

National Citizen Service is a Big Society initiative, and as such we expect that all aspects of society should contribute to, and ultimately benefit from NCS. In 2011, the pilot providers have secured investment and support in addition to Government funding from a range of sources. These include using volunteers, local businesses donating food or travel passes; securing discounts, sponsorship, contributions from parents or young people fundraising. Through NCS and other interventions we will be looking to grow the market for giving from communities and the private sector to support young people and that could include the costs of delivering NCS.

Through the pilots, we have actively encouraged a diverse range of organisations to develop proposals for delivering NCS. These include youth organisations, sports associations, community and voluntary organisations, schools, colleges, local authorities and other statutory providers. Local authorities have been encouraged to support delivery of NCS or bid to deliver the programme themselves to complement other youth services. We do not anticipate asking local authorities to provide funding towards NCS and all funding for the pilots is new and additional to that provided to local authorities.

24. The cost of National Citizen Service in 2011 is around £1,182 per young person. By contrast, the German federal Government spends £1,228 per young person for a whole year's work-based volunteering programme, which we heard enhanced young people's skills and future careers. We do not see how the Government can justify

spending the same amount for only six weeks of National Citizen Service. (Paragraph 128)

NCS is the start of something new, exciting and very positive for our young people—a high quality personal and social development programme which we hope, over time, will be made available to all 16 year olds. NCS will help young people to become responsible citizens through a summer time programme of activity and community service, to help young people make the transition to adulthood. NCS is intended to inspire participants to continue to support their local communities through a lifetime of volunteering and social action, not as a short term one off programme.

NCS promotes and enables volunteering, but is not solely a volunteering programme. It is a personal and social development programme that will ensure young people have a healthy self image, can build positive relationships with people from different backgrounds, and are equipped to make can make decisions which are right for them.

The German programme cited as an example, is part time and is being delivered at a much smaller scale (around 35,000 young people) than our ambition that every 16 year old will have the opportunity to participate in the intensive, formative NCS experience. NCS pilots in 2011 and 2012 will create opportunities for young people to come together and support their local communities, giving us a clear understanding about how the programme works, as well as the overall and component delivery costs. The 2011 and 2012 pilots will be subject to a rigorous independent evaluation, including a value for money assessment.

25. Although the Government has made clear that, subject to the success of the pilots, it wishes to make National Citizen Service a universal offer to all 600,000 16-year olds, it has given no indication of what percentage it calculates would actually participate. Based on the cost per head of the 2011 pilots, it would cost a total of £355 million each year to provide a universal offer of National Citizen Service assuming, for example, a 50%take up. Even allowing for economies of scale, the costs may well outstrip entire annual spending by local authorities on youth services, which totalled £350 million in 2009-10. (Paragraph 129)

NCS is a new and additional offer to young people. Funding is not being taken from other services to fund NCS nor is NCS intended to be a replacement for other youth services. The Government's investment in the 2011 and 2012 NCS pilots shows its commitment to the personal and social development of young people. If the pilots are a success, NCS could become a significant investment in providers of services for young people that will leverage additional donations and support.

NCS is a focussed programme, including an intensive 2 weeks residential experience away from home that the Government believes will have a significant impact on young people at a critical point in their lives. The cost models of 2011 and 2012 pilot providers will be fully scrutinised and tested for best value through an independent evaluation.

This will help to inform how best to incrementally increase the numbers of young people who can participate in NCS from 2013. We anticipate that growing numbers of young people involved would lead to greater economies of scale and hence lower unit costs than are achievable in the current pilot phase.

26. Overall, we applaud the Government's aspiration to make a universal offer to all young people, and for the emphasis placed by National Citizen Service on social mixing, skills building, community engagement and young people's positive participation in society. In a world of less scarce resources we agree that introduction of the scheme would be a positive development. However, given the degree to which youth services are being cut, and in light of our concerns about the scheme's cost and practical implementation, we cannot support the continued development of National Citizen Service in its current form. Consequently, we recommend that the core idea of National Citizen Service be retained, but that it be significantly amended to become a form of accreditation for existing programmes which can prove that they meet the Government's aims of social mixing, personal and social development, and the component parts of National Citizen Service, such as a residential experience and a social action task. We acknowledge that this may further reduce the overall resources available to the youth sector, and thus recommend that Government protects those additional funds currently earmarked for National Citizen Service and divert them into year-round youth services. (Paragraph 131)

The Government is disappointed in the Committee's recommendations on NCS and the way in which they reflect only a partial understanding of the programme's funding arrangements, delivery model, and supporting evidence base.

NCS has been designed and refined over a number of years, through extensive consultation with young people and experts in the sector. NCS pilots offer a broad and inclusive programme focused on 16 year olds. It offers a wide range of activities within a common structure allowing organisations to work to their strengths.

The Government is disappointed that the Committee did not seek the views of alumni of the original highly successful pilots run by The Challenge organisation based on the Government's vision in 2009 and 2010. The Government's 2011 and 2012 pilots are just that—pilots. The Committee has rightly stressed the need for well researched and evidenced based youth initiatives. That is exactly why the Government is piloting NCS in 2011 and 2012 to learn exactly the merits of the scheme and what changes and refinements need to be made to maximise its impact, efficiency and cost effectiveness. Indeed demonstrating the last of these considerations is part of the requirements of providers in the tender process.

The Government believes that while there are a range of programmes that reflect elements of NCS there is no existing equivalent scheme that supports and marks 16 year olds' transition to adulthood through experiencing a common programme. At the outset of the programme, it is crucial that young people taking part in 2011 and 2012 pilots

receive a common experience so that the programme can be tested and evaluated. The Government therefore rejects the idea that NCS could be delivered at this time through accrediting existing programmes.

Formal Minutes

Wednesday 12 October

Members present:

Mr Graham Stuart, in the Chair

Neil Carmichael
Bill Esterson
Pat Glass
Damian Hinds

Charlotte Leslie
Tessa Munt
Ian Mearns
Craig Whittaker

Draft Report (*Services for young people: the Government response*), proposed by the Chair, brought up and read.

Ordered, That the draft Report be read a second time, paragraph by paragraph.

Paragraphs 1 to 13 read and agreed to.

The Government Response was appended to the Report.

Resolved, That the Report be the Sixth Report of the Committee to the House.

Ordered, That the Chair make the Report to the House.

Ordered, That embargoed copies of the Report be made available, in accordance with the provisions of Standing Order No. 134.

[Adjourned till Wednesday 19 October at 9.15 am]

List of Reports from the Committee during the current Parliament

The reference number of the Government's response to each Report is printed in brackets after the HC printing number.

Session 2010-12

First Special Report	Young people not in education, employment or training: Government Response to the Children, Schools and Families Committee's Eighth Report of Session 2009-10	HC 416
Second Special Report	The Early Years Single Funding Formula: Government Response to the Seventh Report from the Children, Schools and Families Committee, Session 2009-10	HC 524
Third Special Report	Transforming Education Outside the Classroom: Responses from the Government and Ofsted to the Sixth Report of the Children, Schools and Families Committee, Session 2009-10	HC 525
Fourth Special Report	Sure Start Children's Centres: Government Response to the Fifth Report from the Children, Schools and Families Committee, Session 2009-10	HC 768
First Report	Behaviour and Discipline in Schools	HC 516-I and -II (HC 1316)
Second Report	The role and performance of Ofsted	HC 570-I and II (HC 1317)
Fifth Special Report	Looked-after Children: Further Government Response to the Third Report from the Children, Schools and Families Committee, Session 2008-9	HC 924
Third Report	Services for young people	HC 744-I and -II
Fourth Report	Participation by 16-19 year olds in education and training	HC 850-I and -II
Fifth Report	The English Baccalaureate	HC 851
Sixth Report	Services for young people: the Government response	HC 1501